

**Q&As from Elementary School RFI Information Session
March 23, 2012**

GENERAL

Q: How does the point system work? What if a school has a weakness in a particular area such as assessments?

A: Among other things, evaluators will be looking at the school's identification of challenges and how best to overcome those challenges. If a school knows it has areas of challenge, it should identify those in its submission and explain how the school plans to address those challenges. The Levy has ambitious goals and the RFI process is intended to identify schools that will best be able to achieve targets aligned with Levy goals for focus students.

Q: Is the weight of the scoring on the work plan for what a school would like to do or what a school currently has in place that it is trying to improve upon?

A: The goal of this process is to invest Levy funds in such a way that maximizes chances of achieving the Levy goals for focus students. If a school has not been successful in achieving Levy goals for focus students, its plan should identify challenges and weaknesses that have prevented more success and how it will overcome these challenges and weaknesses. If a school has had success in achieving Levy goals for focus students, its plan should build upon that success. Ultimately, OFE and evaluators will be looking at how to invest Levy funds in order to maximize the chances of achieving Levy goals for focus students.

Q: Our school has a big "out of the box" plan to close the achievement gap which would cost more than the Levy funds would provide. Should we submit an application that covers the piece of the larger plan we hope will be funded by the Levy, or do we come up with a new plan that could be covered by Levy funding?

A: It is recommended that a school describe the larger plan and explain how Levy funds would fit into that plan. The Work Plan Summary (Attachment 6) includes a section on Leveraged Funds. In that section, the school should explain any other funding sources it currently has or is pursuing. For any proposed use of Levy funds, it is essential that a school conveys a clear sense of specific achievable and measurable goals.

Q: Is the 4 page limit for the Data Analysis Worksheet 4 pages front and back? Does that include Local School-Level Data?

A: The page limits are for total pages of text (whether front or back) not sheets of paper. The page limit for the Data Analysis Worksheet does not include any Local School-Level Data.

Q: What is the page limit for Local School-Level Data?

A: There is no page limit for local school-level data. However, quantity does not help a school's case. Any data or analysis submitted should illustrate how a school uses data to effectively track or monitor progress for focus students.

Q: The RFI application includes ELL students but we are not an ELL-designated school. How do we address those criteria?

A: Schools should state in the Data Analysis section that they have no ELL students, their ELL population is significantly small and/or that a large percentage of their ELL students have waived services. If they have academic outcome data on their ELL students that show positive results, then they should include that information in their response. If they can clearly demonstrate that they do not have a critical mass of ELLs in their schools or that their ELLs are academically successful, then we will not count the ELL Self-Assessment against them.

Q: If a school wanted to add certificated staff using Levy funds, how much control would the school have over the hiring process? Would the school have to go through SPS's displacement procedures to go through filling that position?

A: City/Levy contracts do not trump the SPS' Collective Bargaining Agreements or personnel rules. Schools must go through whatever hiring process is in place. If you have further questions about this issue, schools should contact their Education Director and the district's HR department.

Q: How do Family Support Workers fit into RFIs and the budgeting process? Should a school automatically include them in its proposed budget?

A: If a school plans to use any Family Support Workers, it must include them in its budget. . The sample budget document includes a Family Support Worker.

Q: Some of the items in our larger school plan assume we will be included in the "Creative Approach" process. Should we submit our RFI assuming we will be named a "Creative Approach" school or should we focus our RFI on approaches that are not contingent on other things?

A: The Creative Approach process is starting now but will not take effect until school year 2013-14. Additionally, a school must structure its RFI based on strategies that it can follow through on since the RFI is what its contract will be based upon (and what the school would ultimately be held accountable for). Currently, schools can ask for specific waivers from school district requirements. Schools can mention in their plans if they are seeking a waiver but should still only commit to work they can do without the waiver.

Q: With the Levy funds, can a school create a position that doesn't currently exist in one of the categories within the Collective Bargaining Agreement and have more flexibility in the hiring process?

A: If a school has needs for staff with higher qualifications or with very specific skill sets that are not offered by Seattle Public Schools, a school can work with their Education Director and the HR department to write a new job description.

Q: Under the RFI, is a school required to have a Family Support Worker?

A: The RFI requires a school to provide social, emotional, behavioral and family support services. It is up to a school to determine how to best provide those services to the students in the school.

- Q: My schools would like to keep the Family Support Workers we have. Does a school's Levy dollars go to Seattle Public Schools where a school is obligated to go through the normal hiring processes including seniority?**
- A: City/Levy contracts do not trump the Collective Bargaining Agreement. Schools must go through whatever hiring process is in place. The district is exploring the possibility of reactivating and updating an old FSW specialist position for Innovation Schools that wish to choose their Family Support Worker. Check with Thelma Payne in central office for updates.
- Q: If a school is not selected as one of the four elementary innovation schools, will they still be provided a Family Support Worker?**
- A: Over the next six years, the City is moving elementary school investments toward an integrated funding model similar to how middle and high schools are funded. The City will still have a direct FSW contract with Seattle Public Schools this year for approximately \$2.1 million. Elementary Innovation investments will receive \$427,000 that had previously been allocated for family support services to be spread across the four elementary innovation schools. Every year, another portion of the budget previously allocated for family support will go towards the additional four elementary innovation schools.
- Q: Will race and social justice issues be included in this Levy process?**
- A: One of the goals of the Levy is to close the achievement gap. The first Levy was passed in large part due to findings that children of color and those living in poverty or low-income communities were faring substantially worse than their peers in other neighborhoods. This Levy has been geared towards focus students, including ELL students, in an effort to address these inequities.
- Q: Can Levy funds be used for tuition assistance for out-of-school time opportunities?**
- A: Schools may use tuition assistance as a strategy if they choose. Funds should be budgeted in a way to maximize positive results for focus students with a clear explanation of how the school plans to achieve those results described in their work plan.
- Q: Will teachers and staff be required to attend race and social justice training?**
- A: It is not a requirement of the Levy and is a decision that would be left up to the schools.
- Q: If a school is awarded Levy funds for the 2012-2013 school years, how long will it receive funding?**
- A: A school selected to receive Levy funding will continue to receive funds for the duration of the Levy as long as it continues to hit its performance targets and make progress. Schools selected for Levy funding will have to complete an abbreviated RFI every year but will not be going through the same competitive process as they initially did to receive the funds the first time.

Q: Is there any room in the Levy for schools to apply for funds jointly?

A: Schools cannot joint apply for funds. However, if a school is partnering with another school, it should mention the partnership in its application as it will likely strengthen the application.

Q: Is there a preference for single- or double-sided pages?

A: No.

Q: Is it a legitimate expense to pay members of a student intervention team?

A: The Levy will not supplant school district funds. If intervention team members are currently paid out of district funds, you should not propose to switch that to the Levy.

Q: If a school has an item that does not have a cost associated with it but is part of its strategy, should the school include it in its RFI?

A: Yes. In the work plan, there is a row for how a school is leveraging other funds.

Q: For the Step Ahead RFI, are schools or CBOs eligible to apply?

A: Both schools and CBOs are eligible to apply for the Step Ahead RFI.

BUDGET/FUNDING/CBOs/CONTRACTING

Q: We are a CBO that has been qualified through the RFQ process and currently have partnerships with a number of schools. We would like to expand into more schools. Do we write the RFI in collaboration with schools applying for the RFIs?

A: Schools are responsible for writing and submitting Elementary School RFIs. If schools want to include qualified organizations in their RFI application, they should consult with qualified organizations beforehand. If the school is asked to participate in a clarification meeting, they may be asked to bring community partners. It is important that schools and their partner organizations are truly collaborating and aligned in goals, expectations, and implementation plans.

Q: How does performance pay work?

A: 25% of your entire budget will be performance pay. Performance pay is awarded for achieving the targets set out in a school's contract. Performance pay is not guaranteed and a school should plan accordingly in its proposed budget. However, performance pay is also on a sliding scale; the closer a school gets to reaching its targets, the higher percentage of its performance pay it will receive. There are three points during the year where a school may receive performance pay funds: up to 7.5% can be earned mid-school year, 7.5% can be earned in June, and 10% can be earned in September.

Q: When a school is creating its budget, should it allocate performance pay funds for an expense that could be increased or decreased, or that could be implemented later on?

A: Yes. Performance pay is not guaranteed and a school cannot obligate funds it has not accrued.

Q: Do performance pay funds have to be spent in a certain year?

A: No, there is no time limit on using performance pay funds. A school could try to accrue its performance pay funds over multiple years if it chose to do so.

Q: Does the Levy have a preference for funding certain things as compared to others (e.g., salaries versus tangible items)?

A: One piece of feedback received from prior Levy contracts is for schools to better align what is described in the work plan with what is submitted in the accompanying budget. There is no preference for items funded.

Q: If a school is partnered with a community organization, how will that organization receive its funding? Will there be personal services contracts or will the contracts be through the City?

A: This will depend but, typically, smaller organizations will go through a personal services contract and larger organizations will contract directly with the City. Susie Murphy, Kristi Skanderup and Janet Blanford are working with Seattle Public Schools to host a special workshop for schools selected to receive Levy funding on budgeting and contracting.

Q: Can Levy funds be used for transportation for students?

A: Schools can dedicate a portion of their Levy funds for student transportation if the school has exhausted other options for obtaining transportation services for students. In addition, student transportation services should not be such a significant portion of a school's budget that it diminishes the likelihood of achieving academic outcomes. This year, OFE will work with SPS to identify other funding options for student transportation outside of the Levy investment.

Q: Does a school select a CBO or does the CBO select the school - or is it some combination?

A: The RFI should be submitted by the school and should reflect the strategies the school feels will best help it to achieve positive outcomes for focus students. A school should start with its data and match the school's needs with the best services/providers to meet those needs. From there, the school should identify if there are CBOs that will help them achieve their student academic outcomes.

Q: For salaries, should a school budget average cost for salaries or actual salaries?

A: Schools should budget using their best estimate for what the position will actually cost. Unlike the District, OFE will not give a school additional funds if the staff they hire is more than what they have budgeted. Schools should work with Susie Murphy (elementary schools), Kristi Skanderup (middle schools and K-8s), or Janet Blanford (high schools) if they need help with their budgets.

DATA

Q: Do organizations qualified through the RFQ process have access to the data schools were provided through the RFI process?

A: No detailed school-level data has been published or distributed to organizations as a result of the Levy process. In fact, schools should be careful to ensure compliance with all data-sharing requirements if they want to share data with outside organizations.

Q: Is local school-level data included in the 15 points allocated for data analysis?

A: Yes. A school will not be penalized if it does not include local school data. However, local school data can strengthen a school's application. We understand that a new school may have primarily, or only, school-level data to submit.

Q: If a school sees something in their school-level data that is incorrect, whom should the school contact?

A: Please contact Isabel Muñoz-Colón at Isabel.Munoz-Colon@seattle.gov and Sid Sidorowicz at Sid.Sidorowicz@seattle.gov and we will work with the school and, if needed, Mark Teoh, Director of REA, to identify the cause of the error.

Q: Is a school's analysis of data included in the Data Analysis Summary of Local School-Level Data?

A: A school's analysis of data should be considered local school-level data. As a general rule, if you did not receive the data from OFE or Seattle Public Schools as part of this process, it is probably considered local school-level data.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS QUESTIONS

Q: For the Levy, should schools implement the WaKIDS assessment according to Teaching Strategies Gold standard or OSPI standard?

A: For Levy purposes, the OSPI standard for WaKIDS assessment will be used. If a school is chosen as one of the elementary innovation schools, it must implement the WaKIDS assessment at least twice next school year, even if it is not currently doing so. We are working with Seattle Public Schools to monitor the implementation of the WaKIDS assessment.

Q: Our school is not currently a WaKIDS site. Should our school build in any costs related to WaKIDS in our proposed budget?

A: Yes, schools should budget in their proposals the cost of administering WaKIDS. OFE is working with SPS, the Department of Early Learning, and the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to determine whether there are other resources schools currently administering the WaKIDS assessment can access to defray the costs.

Q: Who are the health-related community organizations that have qualified for Elementary Health Levy funding? Who would a school call to find this information?

A: Contact Rebecca Hutcheson at Rebecca.Hutcheson@kingcounty.gov. Health sponsors did not have to be qualified through the RFQ process in order to receive Levy funds to provide elementary health services.

Q: What are some of the lessons learned from the elementary school programs for which the Levy has provided funding (either through Family Support Workers or CLCs)?

A: One lesson is that the middle school and high school model of integrated funds seemed to have greater success than the elementary school approach. This is the driving force behind moving the elementary schools to the integrated funding model used by middle and high schools.